

R 061555Z FEB 98
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0131
INFO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NDJAMENA 000443

NAIROBI FOR EMBASSY KHARTOUM OFFICE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/08

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SUBJECT: THE CESS POOL: QADHAFI ORGANIZES THE NEIGHBORS

REF: NDJAMENA 402 AND PREVIOUS (ALL NOTAL)

CLASSIFIED BY D. HALSTED. REASON 1.5 (B,D).

¶1. (U) PRESIDENT DEBY BROUGHT BACK FROM HIS FEBRUARY 3-5 VISIT NEWS OF THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY OF SAHEL-SAHARA STATES (COMMUNAUTE DES ETATS SAHELO-SAHARIENS, OR CESS). CESS, ACCORDING TO DEBY'S ANNOUNCEMENT, WOULD APPEAR TO BE FIVE STATES: LIBYA, CHAD, NIGER, MALI, AND SUDAN. THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, BURKINA FASO, TUNISIA AND EGYPT WERE OTHERS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN REPRESENTED AT THE TRIPOLI MEETING, AND MAY ALSO BE PART OF THE NEW ORGANIZATION.

¶2. (U) DEBY SAID THE IDEA DATED BACK TO 1972. CESS WOULD BE FIRST AN ECONOMIC GROUPING, THEN LATER A POLITICAL ASSOCIATION, GIVING A GROUP OF LANDLOCKED STATES OCEAN FRONTAGE. UNITY THEMES FIGURED IN HIS DESCRIPTION: "AT A TIME WHEN IMPORTANT GROUPS ARE BEING FORMED IN EUROPE AND ASIA, WE HAVE A DUTY, AS AFRICANS, TO DEVELOP THE REALITY OF TOTAL AFRICAN INTEGRATION." CESS IS TO FOCUS ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, ENERGY, COMMERCE AND FINANCE. PROVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS WILL BE IN TRIPOLI, WITH LIBYAN MAHDI AZHARI AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AND CHADIAN ADOUM TOGOI AS HIS DEPUTY. QADHAFI WAS NAMED PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT OF CESS.

¶3. (C) COMMENT. CESS IS NOT LIKELY TO AMOUNT TO MUCH, AT LEAST WHERE CHAD IS CONCERNED. IT MAY PROMPT SOME DEBATE AS ANY AGREEMENT WILL PROBABLY BE REVIEWED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. CHAD WOULD GO TO CONSIDERABLE LENGTHS TO ACCOMMODATE QADHAFI, WHO IS GENERALLY REGARDED WITHIN CHAD'S RULING GROUP AS A MENACE. UNDER BETTER CONDITIONS, CHAD WOULD HAVE A GENUINE INTEREST IN A ROUTE TO THE MEDITERRANEAN AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CURRENT TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS.

¶4. (C) THE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ADOUM TOGOI SOLVES ANY MYSTERY OF WHERE HE WENT AFTER HIS NAME SURFACED AS A COUP PLOTTER AGAINST DEBY. ALREADY A LEGEND FOR HIS PRO-LIBYAN SYMPATHIES, TOGOI LOST HIS JOB AS CHAD'S AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA WHEN HE GOT INTO A FIST FIGHT IN NOVEMBER 1996 YEAR WITH THEN-FOREIGN MINISTER KEBZABO OVER DIFFERENCES ABOUT LIBYAN POLICY, ALL RIGHT IN FRONT OF A VISITING LIBYAN DELEGATION. DEBY GAVE HIM A JOB AT THE PRESIDENCY SO HE COULD KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. TOGOI WAS REMOVED FROM THAT JOB LAST NOVEMBER, AND THERE ENSUED - FOR THIS REASON AND EVIDENTLY OTHERS - THE CHALLENGE TO DEBY'S LEADERSHIP FROM FELLOW ZAGHAWAS (REFTELS).

HALSTED